



Environment, Health and Safety Division  
*Environmental Services Group*

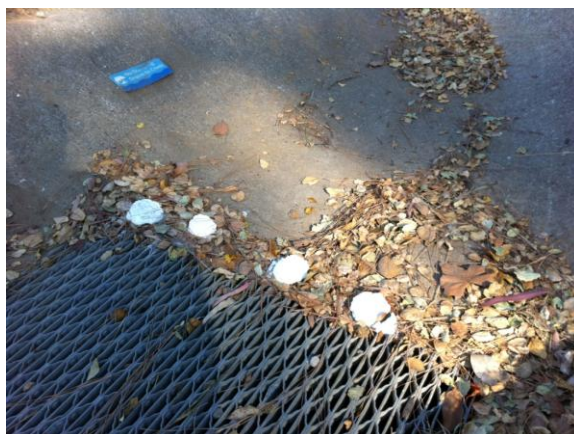
## **But the label says “No Dumping, Drains to Creek”**

You may have noticed the labels placed on or near the Lab’s storm drain inlets with the reminder that nothing should be dumped into the catch basin. So then why do you occasionally see what looks like a tablet or powdery material near a drain? When domestic or drinking water goes down the storm drain, whether the cause is a break in an aging plumbing system or the necessary flushing of a fire hydrant, these tablets are placed and used to neutralize the chloramines in the domestic water, which are very toxic to fish.

The Lab’s supplier of domestic water, the East Bay Municipal Utility District, adds chloramines to the domestic water supply to protect the quality of their drinking water. The standard disinfectant used to be chlorine, but water supply companies found it too unstable. So some years ago, many water suppliers switched to chloramine. While the chloramine levels in drinking water does not adversely affect human health, it is very toxic to aquatic life.

For this reason, regulations prohibit chloramines, or any residual chlorine, in surface waters (e.g., streams, creeks, lakes). The Lab’s storm drain system discharges into the tributaries of Strawberry Creek, so it is important that domestic water be dechlorinated prior to reaching any surface water. The dechlorination tablets used by the Lab contain sodium thiosulfate, which reacts with the available chlorine (or the chlorine portion of the chloramine) to form harmless chloride ions. This reaction removes the chlorine instantly and completely upon contact. After the flow of domestic water has stopped, the remaining portion of the tablets can be removed for aesthetic reasons, although there is no harm in letting this material remain in place.

For more information about storm drain protection, contact Tim Bauters of the Environmental Services Group at x5831 or [twbauters@lbl.gov](mailto:twbauters@lbl.gov).



**An example of left-over dechlorination tablets in front of a storm drain**